

# To Sleep or Not To Sleep?

When to sleep and how long to sleep are questions that most people have battled with at some point in their life. Sadhguru explains to us the difference between sleep and relaxation and that it is not the quantity, but the quality of sleep that is important. He also tells us how the practice of yoga can help reduce a person's Resting Heart Rate.

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**Sadhguru:** The fact that you sleep at night makes some difference between your mornings and evenings. Your mornings would be just as bad if you did not rest well at night. So what is making the difference is not sleep, but the level of relaxation. A good morning is a good beginning, but you slowly lose your cool as the day progresses and you get stressed. It must be understood that the stress is not because of your work. Everybody thinks their job is stressful, but no job really is. It is your inability to handle your own systems that makes you stressful.

How do you keep your system free of stress, so that you are at the same level of relaxation and enthusiasm, morning or evening? In medical terms, if you take my pulse after I have had a good lunch, it would be somewhere around 47 to 48 or near that range. If you take my pulse on an empty stomach, it would be in the range of 35 to 40. Physiologically, this implies that I'm in a state of deep sleep. I am awake enough to do any type of activity in the world, but my body is in deep sleep. So when you are constantly sleeping, there is no question of stress. When there's no stress, why would you be any different at 4 A.M than at 9 P.M?

So what is necessary right now is to keep your system in such a way that it is relaxed by itself, and activity does not take a toll on it. You may be physically exhausted, but you need not be stressed. It is necessary to keep the system this way. You can't slow down your system at the cost of activity. But you're so relaxed that you can't do any activity – that's no good either. For this, there is a technology; there is a whole system to make this happen. If you start certain simple practices of yoga, I would say that within 3 to 4 months your pulse rate would have dropped by at least 8 to 20 counts. The body would run more efficiently and at a relaxed pace.

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What time you go to bed depends on your lifestyle. What matters is the number of hours of sleep you need. I know there is a lot of talk that you must sleep for eight hours a day. What the body needs is not sleep, but restfulness, relaxation. If you keep your body very relaxed and loose throughout the day, if your work, your exercise, are all forms of relaxation for you, your sleep quota will go down naturally. People want to do everything in tension. I see people walking in the park tensed, you know. Now this kind of exercise may be causing more harm to you than well-being, because you are going at everything like it's a war. Why don't you walk easy? Whether you walk or jog, why can't you do it easily, joyfully?

Don't battle with life; keeping yourself fit and well is not a battle, you know. Play a game, swim, walk, whatever you like. If you don't like to do anything except eat cheesecake, you know there will be a problem. Otherwise there is no problem about being relaxed with any activity.

So how much sleep does my body need? It depends on the level of physical activity that you are performing. There is no need to fix either food or sleep. These many calories I must eat; these many hours I must sleep – this is a foolish way to handle life. Today your activity levels are low, you eat less. Tomorrow if your activity is very high, you eat more. It's the same with sleep. The moment the body is well rested it will get up, be it 3 A.M. or 8 A.M. Your body should not wake up to an alarm bell. Once it feels sufficiently rested, it must come awake.

If the body is somehow trying to use the bed as a grave, it won't want to come out. Somebody has to raise you from the dead. It all depends on how you are handling your life. If you are in a certain mental condition that you want to avoid life, sleep is a good way. You will naturally tend to eat and sleep more.

Right now a few people are in such a mental state that unless they load themselves with food and make the body dull they cannot fall asleep. Digestion should happen; you must give it sufficient time before you sleep. I would say 80% of the food that you eat will go to waste if you fall asleep within two hours of eating. If you are in a condition that unless you have a full stomach you cannot sleep, you need to address this issue. This is not about sleep; this is a certain kind of mental state.

So how much sleep? Just as much as the body needs. Food and sleep – let the body decide, not you, because you will not make the right decision about it. The best way to eat and sleep is to go by what your body wants. It is about the body, isn't it?

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